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3. PYRAMID OF AMENEMHAT I., AND THE ADVANCE OF THE RAILWAY

THE EGYPTIAN EXPEDITION

THE Expedition organized to carry on excavations in Egypt on behalf of the Museum, announcement of which was made in the Bulletin of November last, began active work the middle of January on a concession granted to it by the Egyptian Government at the Pyramids of Lisht. These two pyramids are near the southern end of the pyramid-field at a point about thirty-five miles south of Cairo, with the pyramid of Mèdim still further to the south and the Dashir and Sakkâra groups next on the north.

The Lisht pyramids both date from the middle Empire—the northernmost having been identified as belonging to King Amenemhat I., of the twelfth dynasty, and the southernmost as that of his son and successor Usertesen I.—and stand upon two rising desert-hills, about one and a half kilometres apart and but a few hundred metres back from the edge of the cultivated land of the Nile valley. Like all the others, these pyramids have served as stone quarries for the builders of succeeding periods. and in each case, when

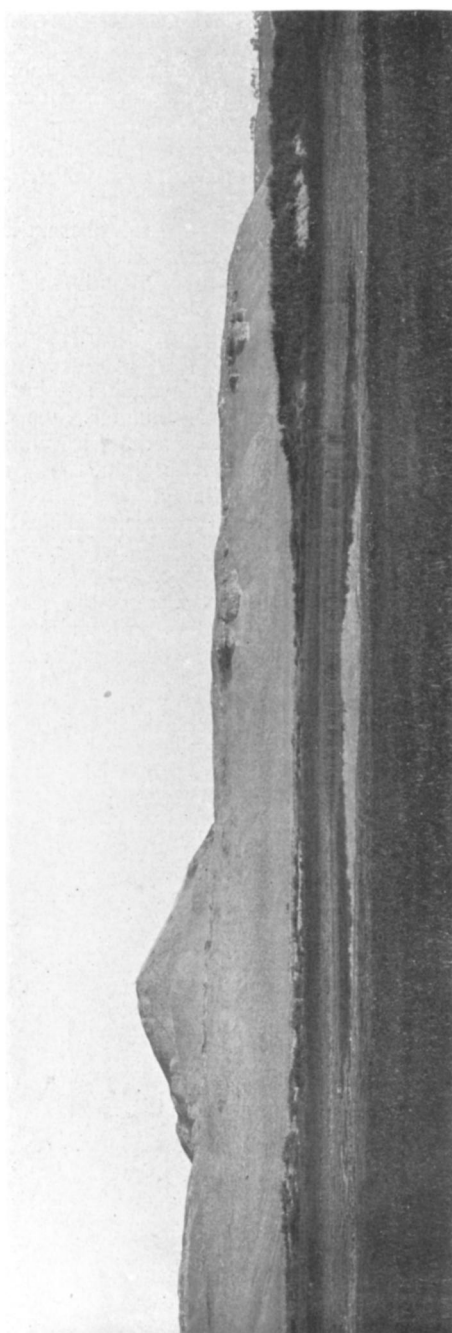
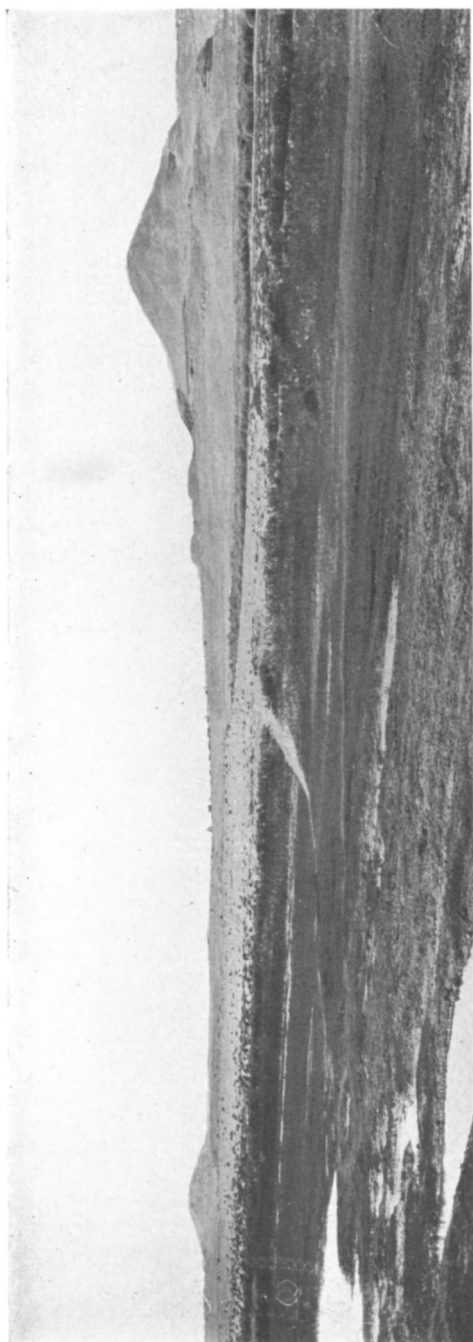
stripped of its casing, the more loosely constructed core has in its outer part become disintegrated, thus covering the construction with a coating of debris and drift-sand.

Previous to the present work of this expedition on the site M. Maspero, in 1882, carried on investigations¹ which resulted in the identification of the pyramids as given above, but he was prevented from reaching the burial-chamber of either pyramid by the occurrence of water in the lower levels of their entrance passages. In 1894-95 excavations were undertaken at Lisht by the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology at Cairo.² That work was confined principally to the southern pyramid, that of Usertesen I., and to the clearing of the pyramid-temple, near which they found a series of ten life-sized seated statues of the king which originally stood in the temple.

In undertaking the present work upon the site we determined to concentrate at first on the northern pyramid of Amen-

¹ *Bulletin de l'Institut Égyptien*, 1883.

² *Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire*, vol. 6. Part 1.



1. PYRAMIDS OF LISHT, FROM THE NORTH EAST. ON THE RIGHT, THAT OF AMENEMHAT I; ON THE LEFT, THAT OF USERTESEN I

2. PYRAMID OF AMENEMHAT I, FROM THE SOUTH



4. CROSSING THE BASE OF THE PYRAMID; LOOKING NORTHEAST

emhat and on the cemetery of private tombs about it, upon which the French had made only tentative trials and which for the greater part remained undisturbed in modern times. We decided, furthermore, to begin the work by first clearing the pyramid along its eastern side, for it was on this side (the river side) of a pyramid that the temple stood in which worship of the King was perpetuated, while on either side of it were often grouped the tombs of important officials of his court. In addition to the uncovering of such constructions if they were still preserved, it was our hope, in clearing back to the original line of the base of the pyramid, to recover perhaps in its lower courses the outer pyramid-facing together with the surrounding pavement. These having been covered to a certain height with drift sand and debris, after the pyramid had ceased to be cared for, would have escaped the plundering for stone which the upper part of the construction suffered later on.

Our work began with the introduction

of the railway, southward toward the pyramid, from a point on the northern edge of the hill where the debris could be dumped into a valley below, the valley having previously been tested and found to contain nothing which would be covered up in the process. The railway was advanced straight in towards the base of the pyramid and then carried along close under its eastern side. The first step in the process of clearing was the removal of the upper layer of drift-sand and disintegrated limestone (of an average depth of about 75 cm.) along the lower slope of the pyramid, thus exposing a hard-packed level of debris,—a level resulting from the general ruin of the site after its final desertion. We next cut through this level, which proved to have an average depth of about 1.25 m., and found scattered over this side of the pyramid generally, house-walls of mud-brick and other remains which proved, from scarabs, beads and similar material found in them, to date from the Roman period. Having recorded photographically this level of the

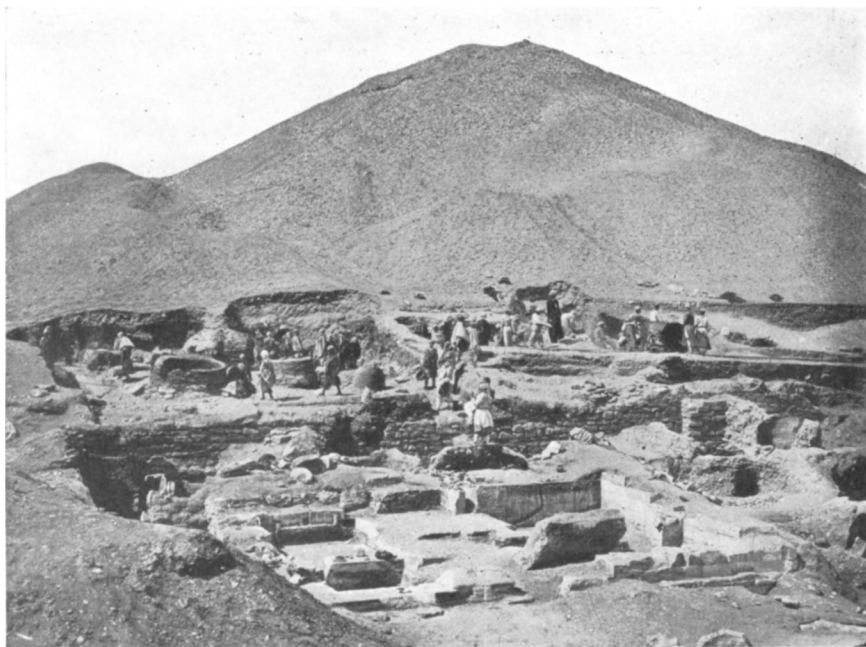
Roman occupation of the site, we are now cutting down to the original twelfth dynasty level below, and are beginning to expose both tomb-construction of that period and also massive walls of sun-dried brick and of stone, which clearly occur in direct relation to the pyramid itself. The debris of this lower level is yielding small objects of the twelfth dynasty, such as amulets, scarabs (one of which is inscribed with the name of Amenemhat I.), and beads, of blue glaze, amethyst, and carnelian.

We are now employing a force of 150 natives, a part of them trained diggers whom we brought down from upper Egypt and a part of them taken from Lisht and the other villages round about. This

force will soon be increased, in order that we may both continue the clearing of the pyramid itself and also begin the excavation of the contemporary twelfth dynasty cemetery which practically surrounds it. Our concession, beyond the district immediately about the pyramids, extends northward for about nine miles and contains cemeteries of other periods which the work of the expedition will cover in due course. The excavations are being carried out under the joint direction of Arthur C. Mace (Oxford) and myself, with Herbert E. Winlock (Harvard) associated with us on the staff of the expedition.

A. M. LYTHGOE.

Pyramids of Lisht,
March 1, 1907.



5. PROGRESS OF THE EXCAVATIONS ALONG THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE PYRAMID